

MODERN PHENOMENA.

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WE are often privately asked what we think of the "spiritual manifestations," so called, and whether we have had any opportunities to investigate them.

When we first heard of the "Rochester knockings," we supposed (not personally knowing the persons implicated) that there might be some collusion in that particular case, or, if not, that the phenomena would, ere long, elicit a satisfactory solution, independent of all spiritual agency. As the manifestations have spread from house to house, from city to city, from one part of the country to the other, across the Atlantic into Europe, till now the civilized world is compelled to acknowledge their reality, however diverse in accounting for them; as these manifestations continue to increase in variety and power, so that all suspicion of trick or imposture becomes simply absurd and preposterous; and as every attempt to find a solution for them in some physical theory relating to electricity, the odic force, clairvoyance, and the like, has thus far proved abortive, — it becomes every intelligent mind to enter into an investigation of them with candor and fairness, as opportunity may offer, and to bear such testimony in regard to them as the facts may warrant; no matter what ridicule it may excite on the part of the uninformed or sceptical.

As for ourselves, most assuredly we have been in no haste to jump to a conclusion in regard to phenomena so universally diffused, and of so extraordinary a character. For the last three years, we have kept pace with nearly all that has been published on the subject; and we have witnessed, at various times, many surprising "manifestations;" and our conviction is, that they cannot be accounted for on any other theory than that of spiritual agency. This theory, however, is not unattended with discrepancies, difficulties, and trials. It is certain, that, if

it be true, there are many deceptive spirits, and that the apostolic injunction to "believe not every spirit," but to try them in every possible way, is specially to be regarded, or the consequences may prove very disastrous.

We might write a pretty long essay on what we have seen and heard touching this matter; but this we reserve for some other occasion. We shall now merely describe some of the phenomena which we witnessed in New York during our recent visit to that city.

The medium, in this instance, was Mrs. Brown, formerly Miss Fish, of Rochester. The circle was composed of six gentlemen, and four ladies. The table was of ample dimensions, so as to accommodate the party without inconvenience. We sat around it in the usual manner (the hands of each individual resting upon the table,) and engaged in social chit-chat. While waiting for some demonstrations from the invisible world, we had our right foot patted as by a human hand, and the right leg of our pantaloons strongly pulled by some unseen agency. This was done repeatedly, though we said nothing at the time. But, thinking it might be possible that the foot of some one of the company might, undesignedly, be in contact with our own, we cautiously felt around to ascertain if this were the case; but there was nothing tangible; and, the moment we put our foot down, the same familiar tapplings and jerks followed. Still we made no disclosure. Raps were then distinctly heard; and the alphabet was called for. Letter by letter, it was rapped out, that the medium must put her feet in the custody of one of the party; and then we were told to wait for demonstrations. This was evidently done to convince every one present that the medium had nothing to do with the phenomena, by way of fraud or collusion; and during the entire sitting (a protracted one,) before any remarkable feat was performed, the medium was invariably ordered to take such a position as to render it clearly impossible for her to be privy to it. The presence of several spirits was indicated during the evening, and satisfactory tests were made; but the most communicative and efficient one purported to be that of Jesse Hutchinson. It was he who had been playing bo-peep with us under the table; and now that the medium was secured, to the satisfaction of all present, he renewed his salutations, not only to us personally, but to nearly every one of the circle. The ladies had their dresses, and the gentlemen their pantaloons, pulled, and their feet patted, in the most emphatic manner. Heavy raps were now made on the floor; and, on being requested to that effect, Jesse beat a march — it seemed to us Washington's march — in admirable time, and in the most spirited manner: no drummer could have done it more skillfully. He was then asked to beat time while the company

joined in singing several tunes, — "The Old Granite State," among others, — which he did to perfection. He then spelled out the following communication by the alphabet: "I am most happy, dear friends, to be able to give you such tangible evidence of my presence. The good time has truly come. The gates of the New Jerusalem are open; and the good spirits, made more pure by the change of spheres, are knocking at the door of your souls."

Isaac T. Hopper now indicated his presence to his daughter, who was at the table, and made some physical demonstrations. His message, as rapped out, was as follows: "I am truly happy to echo back joy and gladness from my happy home. Truth is bearing its way on gloriously; and the subject of Spiritualism will work miracles in the cause of reform. My friends, the rock of prejudice begins to yield to the hammer of truth; and now, with the aid of good spirits, you can blast it without the use of powder." And he subsequently added, "I want you to see that spirits have power to move matter."

It was next rapped out, "Put the bell under the table." We accordingly took the bell (an ordinary table-bell,) and put it down at our feet. In a few moments, it was smartly rung by an unseen power, and then fell to the floor. This was done again and again; the bell making the circuit of the table, and ringing so loudly, that the servant-girl, in an adjacent room, supposing she was needed, came in to inquire what was wanted.

Next, a cane with a hooked handle was laid on the carpet, under the table. Immediately, it struck the table violently, and rubbed along the under surface its entire length. It then fell to the floor, and traversed over and under the feet of several of the party, like a living snake; in one or two instances, the foot being involuntarily lifted to enable it to pass under. Its movements were exceedingly curious. At one time, we caught hold of the handle as it protruded itself by our side, and endeavored to pull it from under the table; but the resistance was as strong as though another hand was grasping it at the opposite end.

We were now directed to put several things under the table, observe how they were placed, and wait for results. When told to look, we found that a penknife was missing; nor could it be discovered by the most careful search. On again resuming our seat, we were told to take another look; and, behold! there was the penknife, precisely where it had been originally placed.

Next we were directed to lay some writing paper, with a pencil upon it, under the table. This was done; and in a few moments, on being told to look, we found the word "Jesse" written upon it in a scrawling hand, as though made with great difficulty. The same experiment

was again made; and "Isaac T. H." (Hopper) was written very legibly, and in a different hand. A third time this was done, and "Mary Jane" was recorded, — the name of a young lady who had been communicating with a gentleman present. The first two autographs we have in our possession.

We now made two requests of Jesse, to convince us yet more strongly of his presence. The first was, to press our right foot firmly to the floor, and to make loud raps directly under it. This was quickly done; the foot being grasped as by a mortal hand, and vibrating to the raps thus strangely made. The second was, if possible, to take us by the right hand with his own, so as to make the touch palpable beyond a doubt. Keeping the hand carefully in custody between our knees as we sat, — the hands of all the company, including those of the medium, being on the table, — we, in a few moments, had it patted, first on one side, then on the other, briskly and repeatedly, as if by another hand, having a negative feeling, as though there was no warmth in it, but natural in every other respect. For the general gratification, the same thing was done to others of the party.

How shall demonstrations like these be accounted for, except on the hypothesis of spirit-agency? If we cannot positively affirm that Isaac T. Hopper and Jesse Hutchinson were present on that occasion, we are at least prepared to declare, as our own conviction, as well as that of the entire company, we believe, that invisible spirits, not of this mundane sphere, performed the phenomena we have thus briefly narrated to our readers.

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